



## الذات الممزقة والبقاء على قيد الحياة: منظورات نفسية نسوية حول الذاكرة والازدواجية في شعر النساء في مرحلة ما بعد الحداثة

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شعر النساء في مرحلة ما بعد الحداثة

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**الكلمات المفتاحية:** القدرة على التأثير، الثنائية، الهوية، الذاكرة، القمع

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عبد الله ، روزا عزيز ، إبراهيم علي مراد ، الذات الممزقة والبقاء على قيد الحياة: منظورات نفسية  
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## Fractured Self and Survival: Psycho-Feminist Perspectives on Memory and Duality in Postmodern Women's Poetry

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### Abstract

Psycho-feminist theory influences postmodern women's poetry and analyzes how gender and psyche interact. It shows how female identity is created, challenged, and expressed through language. This article uses Julia Kristeva's (b. 1941-) psycho-feminist ideas to analyze Rita Dove's, Audre Lorde's, and Anne Waldman's poems. It also investigates how poets show fractured identity, autonomy, and survival within oppression and cultural trauma. Within this background, this study explores how each poet deals with gender, desire, and self-doubt. Dove's poetry show how personal goals can conflict with family or cultural expectations. They reveal a complicated memory that both disorganize and arrange identity. Lorde's poems encourage self-love and strength. Her poetry





challenge personal and external doubts to regain autonomy. Waldman fights patriarchy with her performance style. She exaggerates motivation, vulnerability, and creativity to rebuild self-esteem. Postmodern women poets use fragmented identity, memory, and duality as strategies for challenging oppression. The hypothesis suggests that each poet addresses these themes within different settings.

### المستخلص

يُعد النهج النفسي النسوي في شعر المرأة ما بعد الحداثة بالغ الأهمية. فهو يُحلل تقاطعات الجندر والنفس، ويوضح كيفية تشكيل الهوية والتجربة الأنثوية، وتحديهما، وتعريفهما من خلال اللغة. لذلك، تُطبق هذه المقالة منظوراً نفسياً نسوياً، مستوحى من نظريات جوليا كريستيفا (مواليد ١٩٤١) على قصائد مختارة لريتا دوف (مواليد ١٩٥٢)، وأودري لورد (١٩٣٤-١٩٩٢)، وأن والدمان (مواليد ١٩٤٥). كما تبحث في كيفية استكشاف الشاعرات لهويتهم المتصدعة، وقدرتهن على التأثير، وقدرتهن على البقاء في ظل القمع والصدمة الثقافية. في هذا الإطار، تستكشف الدراسة كيفية تناول كل شاعرة لمواضيع مثل الجندر، والرغبة، والشك الذاتي. تكشف قصائد دوف عن التوتر بين الرغبة الشخصية والتوقعات العائلية أو الثقافية. كما تُظهر ذاكرةً معقدة تُزعزع الهوية وتُشكلها في آن واحد. شعر لورد رحلةً نحو التمكين الذاتي والقبول. تتحدى قصائدها المخاوف الداخلية والخارجية لاستعادة القدرة على التأثير ضمن هويات متقاطعة. يُمثل أسلوب والدمان الأدائي مقاومةً للنظام الأبوي. تُضفي طابعاً درامياً على الدافع والضعف والإبداع لاستعادة قيمة الذات والوحدة الجماعية. يُحدد هذا التحليل الذات الممزقة كمنتج للتحويل الشعري، حيث يُمكن لتجربة التعدد والصدمة والتناقض أن تُعزز التعاطف والمرونة والشفاء. تُعتبر الذاكرة أرسيفاً حياً تُشكله الصدمة والمقاومة، وتُفهم الثنائية على أنها توترٌ مُثمر بين القوة والضعف. تُظهر هذه النسوية النفسية أن شاعرات ما بعد الحداثة يستخدمن الهوية المكسورة والذاكرة والثنائية كطرقٍ لمحاربة القمع الأبوي وإعادة تعريف معنى أن تكون امرأةً من خلال الكتابة. الفرضية هي كيفية تعامل كل شاعرة مع هذه المواضيع في سياقات مختلفة.

### 1. Introduction

This article analyzes postmodern women's poetry to uncover rich and complex explorations about identity, memory, and survival within a fragmented self. In recent decades, feminist and psychoanalytic ideas have increasingly intersected to provide important insights into how female poets cover the tensions of duality between personal and societal, conscious and unconscious, and fragmented and unified identities. In an article, Emily Zakin writes, "Psychoanalysis offers a distinctively psychical understanding of sexual difference, how we come to inhabit our bodies and our identities, and misinhabit them" [1]. This statement shows how psychoanalytic feminist frameworks explore identity, personification, and fragmentation. This study explores ideas concerning memory, duality, and the fractured self in postmodern women's poetry.

It also shows how postmodern female poets use poetic memory narratives and duality experiences in identity loss and survival. Feminist and psychoanalytic approaches have been gaining attention for a while;

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however, there is still a gap, which is to combine those two frameworks to discover their effects on women's poetry. For these postmodern women poets, memory functions as trauma resistance, a source of empowerment, and autonomy achievement. This study also aims to examine the use of fractured self in postmodern women's poetry as a surviving technique. It also aims to emphasize the development of memory, duality, and their effect on women's poetry. Therefore, it explores memory and duality in postmodern women's poetry via a psycho-feminist view. It studies postmodern poetry to address fragmented identities and resilience. Another purpose is to present a broader view of how memory operates in poetry: Is it trauma? Is it a source of transformation? Or is it healing and empowerment? The study aims to also open discussion about poetry being a threatening and healing spot along with a foundation of agency for female poets. The poets in this study use memory to deal with trauma. They also use it to find strength and independence. They also examine how broken identity helps women survive and how memory and duality shape their writing.

The study provides research questions like:

1. How do women poets show that memory and duality affect identity?
2. How do feminist ideas help us understand survival in these poems?
3. Does memory cause pain or help to heal?
4. What do these poems say about women's struggles in the present time?

These questions lead the analysis and help readers to see poetry as a way for women to respond to social pressures. This study uses ideas from both psychology and feminism themes like trauma, memory, agency, and identity. Julia Kristeva's idea of "abjection" is important and relative to this analysis. She says that trauma can make people feel cut off from others. It can make them feel empty. Her idea of "blurred borders" fits with the theme of broken identity. Kristeva highlights that abjection is associated with polluted and contaminated feelings which lead subjects to feel a sense of nothingness in the way they cannot distinguish between the self and the other [2, p:76]. This is common in postmodern women's poetry. Kristeva also shows how women use memory and duality to talk about their lives. Her ideas challenge the belief that identity is always united. She thinks that in some cases poetry helps women to survive from oppression. This study examines how different conflicting identities affect survival. It also sees broken identity as a way to survive.

### 2. Literature Review





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Postmodern women's poetry establishes a wide field of investigation around memory and duality, exceeding cultural and psychological boundaries. Psycho-feminist theory and poetry are employed to examine how women poets convey the contradictions of public/private, body/mind, and tradition/invention to explain traumatized identity and survival strategies through memory. This review examines postmodern women poets through the lens of psychoanalytic and feminist theories, focusing on how these theories reinterpret literary texts.

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on Psychoanalytic Feminism: Psychoanalytic feminism complicatedly examines how gender, identity, and subjectivity are shaped by unconscious processes, trauma, and societal expectations, revealing the complexities of women's psychic life and resistance [1]. Kristeva asserts, "The abject does not adhere to borders, positions, or rules." It disrupts identity, system, and order. It is the in-between, the unclear, and the mixed [3: p.4]. This quotation captures the core of the fragmented self and the dynamic tension of duality, fundamental to psycho-feminist examinations of memory and survival in postmodern women's poetry, wherein the borders of identity and psyche are questioned and redefined through trauma and creativity.

The goal of this review is to bring together recent psycho-feminist research on women's poetry from the postmodern era to show how duality and memory affect both creative writing and critical reaction. In this way, it shows how these writers handle psychological and societal repressions. The materials are classified into topics that show the key points of postmodern women's poetry. The poems examine identity, oppression, and resistance through psycho-feminist lenses.

### 2.1 Psychoanalytic Feminism and Gender Role Negotiation

Samina Najeeb's article "Unraveling Gender Dynamics: Rita Dove's Poetry through a Psycho-Analytic Feminist Lens" examines Rita Dove's poetry using the theory of psycho-feminism. Najeeb focuses on talking about gender roles, sexuality, identity, and freedom in patriarchal environments. She highlights the connection between being Black and the limits that society puts on women. She looks at how Dove thinks about gender, sexuality, and identity. Dove helps Black women feel empowered by connecting their identity to Black sisterhood. Dove also explores gender roles, identity, and what society expects from women. Najeeb's study describes how much women struggle to match their dreams with their duties. According to Najeeb's study, Dove values her connection to Black sisterhood and she also appreciates sharing stories about the lives of African American women. Najeeb also examines Dove's poems that



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are about women, who wish to earn respect and independence while facing patriarchal authority. In general, her research says that Dove is an important feminist voice because she uses poetry to join personal and communal feminine struggles [4].

### 2.2 Intersectional Feminism and Layered Oppression

Nur Azizah explains the influence of racism, sexism, and classism on the lived experiences and poetic expression in African American women's poetry from the Jim Crow era to the present. These poets fight with oppression via literature. Her paper "Intersectional Feminism in the Selected Poems from the Jim Crow, Harlem Renaissance, and Contemporary Eras by African American Women Poets" examines intersectional feminism in African American women's poetry. Jim Crow poets like Frances E.W. Harper used powerful language to address family separation, assault of Black women's bodies, and psychological damage from slavery and segregation. According to Azizah's paper, in the Harlem Renaissance, female poets like Anne Spencer honored Black culture and spoke about Black women's issues. She also says that Audre Lorde and Maya Angelou as contemporary African-American female poets, explored intersectionality beyond race and gender to include sexuality, abnormality, and class. Lorde's poems challenged social norms and promoted solidarity through diversity. Black motherhood and inherent persistence were glorified in Angelou's poetry. African-American women's poetry exposes and resists layered oppression through symbolism, expression, and form. Understanding how racism, sexism, classism, and other types of discrimination are linked and endure as social awareness grows requires intersectional [5].

Aram Omar Esmaeel and Zanyar Faiq Saeed Analyze Maya Angelou's "Our Grandmothers" (1990) via intersectional feminism, focusing on race, gender, class oppression, the legacy of slavery, economic hardships, and ordinary feminism's exclusion of Black women's struggles. The article "Oppression of African-American Women in Maya Angelou's 'Our Grandmothers': An Intersectional Feminist Study" examines African-American women's layered oppression through intersectional feminism. It identifies how race, gender, and class intersect and shape discrimination and resilience. The study employs Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory to clarify the impact of racial, gender, and socioeconomic oppression on the identities of African-American women. The poems indicate that African-American women have financial issues. Also, they are pushed by the boundaries of society. Angelou represents situations that are similar to slavery. For example, lack of





choice, welfare dependence, mistreatment, forced prostitution, and sex marketing. The study analyzes African-American women's gendered oppression. For instance, slavery's heritage of family breakdown and the formal control of Black women's bodies and roles as mothers and laborers. It criticizes typical feminism for ignoring Black women's struggles. Finally, the poem "Our Grandmothers" shows how race, gender, and class oppress African-American women. It reveals that understanding African-American women focuses on an intersectional feminist perspective. The view should recognize their multiple identities and struggles. Angelou celebrated resistance and identity verification while highlighting historical and contemporary barriers [6].

### 2.3 Intersectional Resistance and Identity in Black Lesbian Experience

Alqaryouti, Marwan Harb, et al.: Analyze Audre Lorde's "Who Said It Was Simple" (1973) through intersectional feminism. The article focuses on race, gender, sexuality, the complexity of Black lesbian women's marginalization, and resistance. "Redefining Resistance: Revolutionary Women in Audre Lorde's "Who Said It Was Simple" highlights Black lesbian women's racial, gender, and sexuality oppressions. The poem focuses on society and feminist groups that lead these problems. She shows that life is hard for Black women. The poem shows how racism hurts Black lesbian women and how sexism and prejudice make them feel left out. Lorde reveals her sorrows and laments because society does not accept her as she is. She uses the "tree of anger" as a metaphor, since she feels oppressed by the society. She feels angry, yet she is strong enough to fight back. The poet feels she does not belong to any categories from society because of her race. She also feels excluded because of her gender. Overall, she feels left out because of her sexual orientation. Lorde notes that feminists help when white women want freedom, but this is not the same toward black women. She shows that some feminists ignore racial differences. In other words, Black women are pushed aside in these groups. This research shows that these Black women's groups need real support and the support should respect all of their experiences [7].

### 2.4 Complex Identity and Political Empowerment of Women of Color

Nahed Mohammed Ahmed Meklash studies Audre Lorde's poetry. She focuses on the differences among women of color. She believes poetry helps people gain political power and she also points out problems in feminism and antiracism when they only focus on one part of identity.



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The article “An Intersectional Reading of Women of Color’s Multiple Identities and Differences in the Poetry of Audre Lorde” uses intersectional feminism to analyze Lorde’s poetry. It looks at how Lorde portrays Black women’s lives. These women face many forms of discrimination. She shows how race, gender, class, sexuality, and other identities shape oppression and identity. Kimberlé Crenshaw’s intersectionality theory is used throughout the paper to highlight Black women’s inherent differences. It emphasizes that identity types can be political links rather than rigid groups. Lorde also explores Black women’s numerous identities like poet, mother, warrior, lesbian, and survivor and how they coexist. The poems “Power” (1978) and “Litany for Survival”(1978) are analyzed. The murder of a Black boy by a white police officer inspired Lorde to write “Power” to examine racial injustice and identity. However, “Litany for Survival” represents Black women’s fear, oppression, and assertion. Lorde’s poems imply the necessity to articulate and tolerate [8].

In conclusion, these sources apply psychoanalytic and intersectional feminist frameworks to analyze African American women’s poetry, exposing complex conflicts of identity, oppression, and resistance. They all help and find research needs and their inputs are important. Samina Najeeb employs psychoanalytic feminism to examine Dove’s gender, sexuality, and identity. It shows how Dove is different and how she is connected to Black sisterhood. Nur Azizah analyzed Jim Crow, Harlem Renaissance, and contemporary poems to prove how African American women poets employ intersectional feminism. The study reveals how intersectionality has developed throughout centuries and underlines the need to recognize different oppressions. Third, Aram Omar Esmaeel and Zanyar Faiq Saeed examine Maya Angelou’s “Our Grandmothers,” to show how race, gender, and class affect Black women. Slavery, economic struggles, and physical corruption are discussed. Alqaryouti, Marwan Harb, et al. show how Audre Lorde’s “Who Said It Was Simple” evaluates societal and feminist rejection and describes Black lesbian women’s multidimensional oppression. Finally, Nahed Mohammed Ahmed Meklash via intersectional feminism shows Black women’s many identities like poet, mother, lesbian, warrior, and survivor.

These researches go beyond identity differences to examine how distinctions empower, combine, and transform society. Research gaps and future directions include studying intersectionality across different cultures. Future researches might compare African American women poets to women of color internationally. Psychoanalytic feminist methods like Najeeb’s psychoanalytic reading for Dove may reveal less about





internalized oppression and resistance than similar studies for other leading and developing poets. Lesbian Lorde is highlighted, but studying lesbian Black women poets outside her could help explain sexuality's role in intersecting oppressions. These directions are built on the five studies and reflect a dynamic, changing subject with numerous complex and inclusive study opportunities.

### 3. Methodology

This article analyzes Rita Dove, Audre Lorde, and Anne Waldman's poems using qualitative analysis. It analyzes the poems to find and explain psychological and feminist themes. Psycho-feminism will be used to analyze gender, social injustice, identity, racism, and psychological depth. Psycho-feminism, based on Freud's views, which are reinterpreted by feminist theorists, examines how unconscious desires, familial structures, and early childhood experiences form identity and patriarchal standards [1]. Traditional psychoanalysis has been criticized for its patriarchal unfairness, particularly in its treatment of female sexuality and development.

However, feminist scholars like Julia Kristeva have modified psychoanalytic models to show how psychological tools spread gendered oppression and imagine replacements that offer female agency. Psycho-feminism states that gender identity is psychically created in socio-cultural situations. Kristeva criticizes the symbolic order dominated by language and male discourse, where women's voices have been marginalized or misrepresented. Kristeva's semiotic chora creates a pre-linguistic, maternal space that shifts linear logic and allows non-patriarchal identity expression [9]. Psycho-feminism is strong in literary studies because it analyzes how internal conflict, oppression, desire, and trauma are expressed in symbols and language. It lets scholars see literature as a point where female subjectivity is discussed, split, and transformed against dominant ideologies. Psycho-feminism clarifies women writers' personal and collective competitions against oppression via poetry.

According to the article "Radical Female Authorship: Towards a Psycho-Feminist Literary Criticism", psycho-feminism challenges patriarchal psychological structures and reveals ways for empowerment, healing, and challenging creativity [10: p.64]. Moreover: Psychoanalysis develops a theory of the unconscious that links sexuality and subjectivity necessarily together. In doing so, it reveals the ways in which our sense of self, and our political loyalties and attachments are influenced by unconscious drives and ordered by symbolic structures that are beyond the view of individual agency [1]. Julia Kristeva is a semiotician who



analyzes signals and meanings. She writes about linguistics, psychoanalysis, feminism, and literary criticism. She has pioneered “intertextuality” and defined semiotics, which is the study of signs and symbols and symbolic language use [11]. Kristeva has advocated for a more just society, especially for women [12]. Her complex relationship with psychoanalysis and feminism made her a key figure in psycho-feminist thoughts. Kristeva uses Freudian and Lacanian notions to examine how unconscious processes impact identity, language, and desire and criticizes patriarchal injustice [13]. She claims that poetry and art allow the repressed semiotic to threaten identities and show unfairness that resists gender roles. Her work shows how writing and language can challenge established norms. It also helps express women’s feelings, power, and change [9].

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

##### 4.1 Death, Desire, and Identity

Several poems by Rita Dove, Audre Lorde, and Anne Waldman show how death, identity, desire, and self-doubt are linked in a way that frees and limits people at the same time. They show how fear of death can change human and social rules can make it hard to identify identity. Dove’s poems show how her family’s moral or cultural rules shut off her personal dreams. Her identity is shaped by her past and her gender. Lorde writes about challenges inside and outside herself. She finds strength by accepting all parts of who she is, even with doubts and fears. Waldman’s performance poems show how men’s power limits women’s freedom. Ambition can help women find their voice and feel valuable again. These poems point to problems of doubting one’s worth or skills. They show how tough it is to live and grow in a harsh world. They talk about death, desire, and looking for yourself as a woman. The poems make readers feel confused. This confusion is the best way to show how death, desire, and identity can help people survive and grow in hard times.

Rita Dove’s poem “Soup” (2021) is about death, identity, desire, and self-doubt. It says, “Yes, soup was what I wanted” [14]. This line shows a need for comfort and food. It represents the need for care when life is hard. It also points to being someone who seeks comfort and safety. The poem is about her life, especially how she felt after knowing she had Multiple Sclerosis (MS). MS disease that “breaks down the protective covering of nerves. The symptoms include numbness, weakness, trouble walking, and changes in eyesight [15].

Dove compares cooking lentils to finding slow courage and strength to face troubles. She says the lentils soften and their “heart splits into wings.” This talks about the strength to deal with illness. Dove



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prefers to think of soothing things, like soup, rather than scary news about her health. She says, “Yes, soup was what I wanted” [14]. The poem talks about death and illness in a way that is scary and funny, humble, and graceful at the same time. Dove adds, “not news but the slow courage of the lentil as it softened” [14]. The “slow courage” of softening lentils means slowly accepting death and being patient with life’s changes. The phrase “its heart splitting into wings” [14] talks about transformation and wanting to change or wanting more than is possible. It describes the struggle between rising up and staying grounded due to health issues. Dove also says, “Not good cop bad cop but the quick metallic smack of too much thyme given too quickly” [14]. The sudden loud “smack” happens during moments when you doubt yourself or make mistakes. These moments are difficult, yet they teach important lessons, which can shake your calm and confidence. These lines also reveal how hard it is to control your ambition and avoid making mistakes. The last line, “the kind of mistake you never make again,” [14] means failure can help you learn and get better. It shows both humility and determination in overcoming self-doubt, and it stresses how identity is always changing through trial and error along the way. In general, “Soup” employs cooking images to look at how people may be strong in the face of death, showing how patience, change, and the difficult balance between ambition and self-doubt shape who we are.

The poem gently considers the whispers of life’s fragility and the quiet courage it takes to continue and grow. Furthermore, MacDougall states, “Dove’s poem “Soup,” in the “Little Book of Woe” section, relates what she thought about after her neurologist gave her an MS diagnosis: “I have good news and bad news ...” Her mind wandered, then landed on the process of making comforting, caring soup to reduce the harshness of the notion that there was bad news to accept.” He also says, Dove prefers to think about the slow process of making and eating soup instead of focusing on the bad news of her disease that indicates humanity’s helplessness toward illness and mortality [14].

In Audre Lorde’s poem “From the House of Yemanjá” (1978), the themes of mortality, identity, ambition, and self-doubt are deeply intertwined and expressed through the complex mother-daughter relationship and cultural heritage struggles. First, mortality is indirectly expressed through the cyclical and timeless nature of the speaker’s experience with her mother and family, suggesting survival within suffering and unresolved trauma. For instance, Lorde states:

All this has been

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before  
in my mother's bed  
time has no sense  
I have no brothers  
and my sisters are cruel. [16: p. 235]

Lorde talks of a type of “emotional” loneliness and oppression that comes from her family or society. The poem’s never-ending visuals and the idea that “all this has been before” make a painful circle that makes someone face their past and move on from the trauma that has been passed down from generation to generation. The second main idea in the poem is identity, which shows how two selves are at conflict with each other because of cultural heritage and social expectations. Based on what Lorde says,

I bear two women upon my back  
one dark and rich and hidden  
in the ivory hungers of the other  
mother  
pale as a witch  
yet steady and familiar  
brings me bread and terror [16: p. 235]

These lines show how the speaker’s tension between her cultural self and what society wants her to do is both nourishing and scary for her. The speaker says that she has “two women on my back.” One is “dark and rich and hidden,” [16: pp. 235-236] which stands for her actual Black cultural identity, while the other is “pale” and “steady,” which stands for the norms, privileges, or impacts of whiteness in society. This split demonstrates how the speaker is trying to find her identity: “I am the sun and moon and always hungry for her eyes [16: pp. 235-236]. This expresses the desire to be seen and understood, which shows that the person has several sides to their identity and is always hungry for acknowledgment and acceptance, as indicated before. The conflict between her “dark and rich” self and her “pale as a witch” mother illustrates the complexities of her identity creation amongst cultural realities and external pressures to fulfil. The speaker seems to want “perfection,” which is wanting to fit in with the family and the cultural line and trying to make sense of the seeming gap between her two identities and get society to accept her. The other standard arises from self-doubt, as she appears to struggle with the noticed insufficiency of not





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meeting her mother's standards while feeling alienated inside her family. For example, Lorde says:

My mother had two faces  
and a broken pot  
where she hid out a perfect daughter  
who was not me [16: p.235]

Being rejected and wanting to be the perfect daughter are in conflict with each other in this poem. You can feel like your mother does not like you because of the line "My mother had... a broken pot where she hid out a perfect daughter who was not me" [16: pp.235-236]. The cruel relationship with her sisters and the lack of a brother emphasize isolation and doubt in her self-worth. Furthermore, the poem's last lines show this ongoing struggle: "Although day and night may meet, they will always be separate" [16: pp.235-236]. She understands that her fractured identities will remain and that they may never fully join. This means she still has doubts and feels uncertain. Eunice Karanja shares her thoughts on this idea:

Audre Lorde tells the story of a daughter searching for who she is in "From the House of Yemanjá." Her mother's two sides shape her path. The speaker feels torn between two different influences as she wants to connect with her cultural heritage. At the same time, she is troubled by a presence that is both familiar and scary. The poem talks about how these situations happen again and again. It shows how important it is to have a cultural identity [17].

Anne Waldman's poem "Trick o'death" (2018) uses vivid imagery, ritualistic language, and the reunion of life and death experiences to talk about death, identity, and the conflict between ambition and self-doubt. First, Waldman describes mortality as an accepted reality just like living. She emphasizes that death is unavoidable and makes a circle out of it, showing that life and death are linked and part of a process of change. The ending of the poem shows that Waldman does not fear death and sees it as a normal part of life. For instance, Waldman says:

when you are sitting  
with the corpse of your friend  
this is what to do  
when what do you do [18: p.1]



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The poem begins by saying “when you are sitting with the corpse of your friend,” [18: p.1] in which she personifies death by giving it the physical qualities as if death is a person/ pet. Also, she describes rituals such as making a “binding of your mind,” sacrifices, and offerings (“coins of ancient India on eyes,” “feathers and serpentine”) [18: pp.1-17] as ways to engage with death. Additionally, Waldman refers to death as “awakening,” where “the alive, like you, ahunted / like ‘art’ like ‘phantasm’” [18: pp.1-17] suggests a dreamlike state between life and death. The poem sheds light on the cyclical nature of life and death. For example, Waldman writes, “you’re fearless / when you are the tomb / & prescient womb,” [18: pp.1-17]. Here, she talks about how death is part of ongoing transformation.

The poem shows how identity is always moving and shifting. It includes phrases like “ungendered now” and “feminine aperture.” These phrases show that gender and culture shape each other. The poem’s idea of the self feels tangled and layered, because Waldman writes about “fragmented realities,” which means a self that exists on many levels. The poem represents identity in many forms like cultural and feminine. Each identity is personal but also shaped by the world around us. The poem also questions “patriarchal poetry” [18: pp.1-17]. This points out the problems found in traditional, male-centered writings. Also, when Waldman says:

it pulls it spins you, gender  
into fragmented realities  
of future past & present  
a span is epic [18: p. 6].

This part of the poem shows that identity changes and is not simple. Gender is not always the same; it keeps changing. The line “it pulls it spins you” gives you the feeling of always moving, which is a way to picture how gender keeps shifting. The phrase “fragmented realities” means that people feel their identity in pieces and layers, not as a single simple thing. These pieces come from the future, the past, and the present. This means that being yourself happens across different times, mixing memory and hope, instead of just being in the present.

When the text says “A span is epic,” it means the journey of figuring out identity is huge and complex. The experience of being yourself covers a lot of social, cultural, and personal areas. Waldman’s poem looks at identity as something that changes and breaks apart, while





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connecting strongly to society and life's big questions. Another theme is the tension between ambition and self-doubt. For example, Waldman says:

Get over right now  
paradox of fear  
ineptitude  
muscle up  
find yourself in boundary [18: p.20]

This is the struggle between wanting to do well or express yourself, and sometimes not feeling sure or feeling afraid of failure. In these lines, Waldman shows the moment a person goes through in which you feel like you are the third party among your ambitions and self-doubts. In this scene, one has to choose to follow and act upon the ambitions or the fears of self-doubt.

### 4.2 Memory, Duality, and the Fractured Self

Fractured-self is the feeling of having a split or broken identity, which is typically caused by the stress and contradictions of oppression, memory, and social norms, especially for women. The self is not unified but fragmented by conflicting influences and internal battles. In the poetry of Rita Dove, Audre Lorde, and Anne Waldman, memory acts as a varied and often unpleasant record of personal and collective history, especially those related to trauma, heritage, and the domination over women. It shapes identity while also breaking it down, which leads to a fight between different parts of the self and outside forces. When you have two opposing forces or states in your mind or experience at the same time, you are experiencing duality. Strength and weakness, desire and self-doubt, and empowerment and conquest are all examples of dualities. The split indicates how these forces are not in agreement with each other and how identity and expression need to cooperate with each other. Each poet has an own way of looking at memory and duality.

Rita Dove often writes about how personal and historical memories can be at odds with each other. She demonstrates how past traumas and societal standards may simultaneously fracture individuals and influence their identities. However, Audre Lorde's poems look at how race, gender, and sexuality may be both powerful and weak at the same time. They highlight how people with less power deal with both. Anne Waldman's poetry show the multiplicity of the self through the use of performative voices and sound to illustrate fragmented identities and the tension



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between confidence and self-doubt. In their poems, these themes are put together to highlight how hard it is to know who you are while you are being oppressed and how self-awareness and art may give you power. Rita Dove's poem "Exit" (2016) is about a woman who is going through a big transformation or migration. This is a metaphor for a broken identity and inner division. The woman in the poem is stuck between her old life and the new one she is about to start. For example, Dove states:

Just when hope withers, the visa is granted.  
The door opens to a street like in the movies,  
Clean of people, of cats, except it is your street you  
are leaving. [19: p.259]

"Just when hope withers" means losing hope or certainty, which can mean something is wrong internally or has fractured. This invisible space shows a split self, because she isn't fully in her past and isn't fully in her future either. This duality is also shown in the lines; "The door opens to a street like in the movies, ... except it is your street you are leaving" [19: p.259]. She feels both the excitement of a new start and the loss of her old self. This dual nature shows the stress of leaving a known self behind for an unknown one, which also changes identity as a new one starts and an old one ends. The speakers' thoughts are on what she is leaving behind settle the memory. The poem makes the narrator, who could be Dove herself or any other narrator think of her past and the life she is leaving behind, which is full of both hope and worries like when Dove says, "The windows you have closed behind" [19: p.259]. In the same context, Dove says:

Well, the world's open. And now through  
the windshield the sky begins to blush  
as you did when your mother told you  
what it took to be a woman in this life. [19: p.259]

The memory of home and the sense of "What it took to be a woman in this life" [19: p.259] remain in her mind, as illustrated by the closing line, "The sky begins to blush, as you did when your mother told you what it took to be a woman in this life" [19: p.259]. This simile connects the personal memory of a mother's lesson to the natural world, indicating that memory shapes her identity as she changes. This closing line uses a simple yet powerful image. It links the speaker's memories of learning from her mother to the natural environment, where the sky's soft





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changing color is like the emotional blush of a little girl who is hearing this crucial lesson. This statement suggests that the speaker's mother taught her what it means to be a woman, and that memory stays with her and transforms her as she goes through life. The speaker's identity changes because of that lesson, much way the sky changes color. The memory is more than simply a truth; it's something that lives inside her and shapes her feelings and who she becomes. It shows how lessons and experiences that are very personal become part of who we are and continue to shape us as we grow and evolve. So, memory and identity are linked, which shows that what we learn and remember changes how we see ourselves throughout time.

In short, "Exit" shows the broken self through the tension between leaving and arriving, the remembrance of what is left behind, and the two views of loss and possible change. The poem's pictures and structure help the reader understand how the speaker's memory and inner conflict are at the heart of her shifting identity. Dove often writes about people who are struggling in their homes or other locations they know well, like in the poem "Dusting" (1981). In "Exit," Dove writes about how hope for a better future can be at odds with how bad things are right now. These poems show the struggle between wanting to be safe and the problems that come from trauma or loss. They also look at how memory in domestic spaces can be both painful and transformative. In Audre Lorde's poem "Power," (1976) the themes of fractured self, memory, and duality are powerfully expressed through the exploration of racial violence, injustice, and the internal conflict that arises from living under systemic oppression. The poem reflects a fractured self through the speaker's struggle against the power and rage of Black people in the face of racial violence. The speaker acknowledges the internal division between the desire for justice and the danger of being dominated by hatred. The first lines of the poem say:

The difference between poetry and rhetoric  
is being ready to kill  
yourself  
instead of your children. [16: p. 215)

Being able to hurt yourself rather than other people, as in "being ready to kill yourself instead of your children," [16: pp. 215-216) is a tough choice and a thoughtful decision. This choice shows that the person is split between their life and who they are. This shows a difference between what other people want (rhetoric, which can be persuasion or



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even manipulation) and a strong desire to sacrifice oneself for others. You can think of these two sides of the self as poetry and rhetoric, which are fighting with each other. Poetry is a direct, honest speech that requires taking chances, while rhetoric is an outside force that limits and stresses a person out.

Identity can be very hurtful when it is threatened or split by unreasonable requests. This break shows how bad it can be for the feelings. It shows a tough battle inside and a loss of power and personality. These lines usually describe the divided self as a state of inner conflict and a split where you have to make tough, selfless choices to stay alive instead of an easy decision. They show how hard it is to deal with the broken self and the choices that made it happen.

The analysis fits with a broader look at the broken self in poems of Rita Dove, who shows how oppression and pain can tear apart and test a person's identity. In lines such as; "Better kill yourself than your children" there is a very painful way to tell someone to end his/her life instead of giving someone else pain. People who make this choice are torn between wanting to help others or wanting to hurt themselves. The two (poetry and rhetoric) are at odds with each other because both are honest, risky ways of expressing yourself that need you, while rhetoric is an outside weight. When a situation is so hard that it is impossible to pass, it can really test a person's character and cause them to lose control and their sense of self.

Overall, these lines show the idea of a broken self that is in a state of inner conflict and rupture and has to make hard, selfless choices instead of easy ones. The painful facts and decisions that lie at the heart of a broken self are suppressed by strong emotions. Fear and pain from the past, especially the killing of Black children, are linked to memory in Audre Lorde's poem "Power." When people and groups hurt others, memories of such wrong actions can stay with them. People are being requested to remember and talk about these murders so that they don't go away or be forgotten. Some lines in the poem reflect this by talking about sad recollections of violence against people of different races.

The speaker talks about the dead Black boy and how his "face destroyed by gunshot wounds" reveals how unfair and racist the world really is. Also, Baldwin [20] says that Lorde's "Power" is about the death of a black ten-year-old boy named Clifford Glover by a white undercover police officer in 1973. The poem talks about killing Black people by putting the violence in the perspective of a bigger memory of unfairness in history and society. It centers on the case of a 10-year-old boy shot by a white police officer and the ensuing lack of justice from an all-white





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jury [20]. In “Power,” memory is a strong and painful force that draws attention to racial brutality and encourages resistance and the forging of meaning via poetry. This makes it difficult to ignore or forget the effects of the systemic slaughter of Black people.

Duality in “Power” is explored through contrasting forces such as poetry versus rhetoric, power versus corruption, and destruction versus healing. Lorde considers the conflict between using art as a way to fight back against discrimination and the harmful effects of oppression and injustice. In this case, Lorde states:

The difference between poetry and rhetoric  
Is being ready to kill  
Yourself  
Instead of your children. [16: p. 215]

This shows the difference between rhetoric, which seeks to control or hurt others, and poetry, which sacrifices oneself for the sake of truth. Another example of duality is the connection between poetry’s power to inspire and its power to destroy. Lorde struggles with her own pain and the idea that it could be used in a positive way instead of a negative one. In this duality, there is self-destruction toward the truth and harm done to others through one’s speech. Another is the very trapped destruction inside and the possible empowering one by poems. While Lorde was fighting her inner chaos, she also had the healthy chance of recognizing it enough to use it in a good way instead of a bad way. She also says:

I have not been able to touch the destruction within  
me.  
But unless I learn to use  
the difference between poetry and rhetoric  
my power too will run corrupt as poisonous mold  
or lie limp and useless as an unconnected wire [16: p.  
215]

These lines show that power can be both a source of inner conflict for people who have it and a creative force for Black communities. Well-known people in the Black community, like the current poet, talk about how hard it is to turn pain into useful, meaningful statements instead of hurtful or pointless words. The fact that Audre Lorde’s poems have two sides illustrates how they deal with racism, gender, and social justice in a more general way. For instance, “poisonous mold” and “unconnected



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wire” are two pictures that highlight how power can be either bad and corrupt or not work at all. This contrast depicts how power operates in society: there are oppressors and the oppressed, justice and injustice, and living and destruction.

Anne Waldman’s poem “Kontraniki” (1990s) explores the concepts of a fractured self, memory, and duality through her distinctive writing style and repeated themes that address numerous identities, ambiguous language, and communal experience. Waldman’s poetry frequently depicts a fractured or fragmented self. This demonstrates that identity is not static but subject to transformation over time. Waldman, for instance, examines the concept of the self as a “dissipative structure—a flowing apparent wholeness, highly organized but always in process” in her broader piece. This notion aligns with the concepts of dualism and a fractured identity.

In her poem “Kontraniki,” which means “contract killers,” a word used during the Bosnian “conflict” [18: p.383] Waldman depicts the concept of a fragmented self inside a terrible environment. The poem talks about war, bloodshed, pain, and political tyranny, all of which are related to the conflict in Bosnia. The poem talks about areas around the world that have been through war, including Bosnia. This links it to the sad history of the Bosnian War in the 1990s, which was full of racial violence, genocide, and the suffering of people [21]. She also talks about how horrible war is and how political power battles cause people to suffer. By comparing “holy Bosnia” to other difficult areas in the past and present, she explains how the Bosnian conflict is part of a larger discourse about violence and injustice that affects everyone in the world. In this regard, Waldman says:

Include a human action:

We were hiding. No Eleni and I were  
carrying snake “purposes,” which  
meant we needed to intercept  
the luggage conveyor belts because  
they were dangerous. [18: p.382]

These lines illustrate the concept of a shattered self by depicting a disrupted experience of identity, survival, and purpose inside a dangerous situation. The line “we were hiding” shows a broken concept of safety and identification. The speaker and Eleni relate to the poem “Kontraniki”, which shows a risky and hidden life. Hiding suggests that someone looks strong on the outside but is weak on the inside. This is a classic indicator of a fractured identity induced by trauma or a danger from the outside.





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Also, carrying “snake purposes” suggests unpleasant feelings, because snakes symbolize threat, transformation, or secret knowledge.

This means that their behaviors have a complicated, secret aim that makes it hard for them to understand themselves fully. The phrase “intercept the luggage conveyor belts because they were dangerous” can be understood in terms of duality and a disjointed identity. Stopping luggage conveyor belts, which are sites where people travel, change, and move, is risky. This makes it look like a difficult approach to deal with everyday situations that have turned dangerous or scary. This deviation from the norm suggests a shattered self that is seeking to talk about locations that have been affected by trauma or outside dangers. The word “intercept” makes it sound like you want to defend yourself, which highlights the tension between being vulnerable to being harmed and doing something to stay alive in a fractured identity. Next, “the conveyor belts” signify flow and steady motion. These objects generally indicate progress and order, but in this situation, they are harmful since they show two sides of what looks normal while hiding a threat.

This opposition reflects how the speaker feels inside and that he or she is split between safety and danger, order and chaos. This statement describes how diverse forces can work together: safety and danger, inactivity and activity, and order and chaos. This line from Waldman’s poetry, which often looks at different selves and layered realities, shows the broken self as someone who is stuck between outside threats and internal chaos. It also shows the difference between what people see and what they really are in a world full of political and personal tensions. The lines show that the speaker’s identity is split between means to stay alive (“hiding”) and a mission with a goal (“carrying snake purposes”). This shows how hard it is to have a goal and live with a damaged identity in a risky social or political situation.

Waldman writes about memory in a lot of her poems in a way that is both dynamic and multidimensional. She brings together personal history, shared experience, and cultural resistance. She often writes about specific persons, locations, and eras, integrating personal, political, and historical facts. Waldman emphasizes that memory is a dynamic, ongoing process that encompasses more than simple recollection. It also includes change and neglect. She often talks about her memories of artistic groups, political groups, and personal relationships to create a rich, inspiring source of experiences that helps both her own identity and the cultural heritage of the whole group. This makes remembering an earning for her to interact with other people, stay active, and start afresh with her writing. When you read “Kontraniki”, the statement “Include a human



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action: we were hiding” sounds like a memory or recall, which makes the past seem more genuine and personal. Hiding makes you feel weak, terrified, or resistant, which are all essential feelings that come up in real life memories. The recollection is broken up by the phrase “snake ‘purposes’” and the dangerous “luggage conveyor belts,” which add layers of symbolic significance and strange images.

In Anne Waldman’s poetry, Eleni is most likely Eleni Sikelianos, who is both a poet and Waldman’s niece. Eleni Sikelianos is the daughter of the famous poet and translator Pola Kapodistria. She comes from a well-known literary family that includes Anne Waldman. Their relationship is personal, familial, and literary because Eleni is Waldman’s niece and they have both helped and inspired each other’s works [22]. Eleni is an important character in a secret event in Waldman’s “Kontraniki.” She doesn’t just sit back and watch; she takes part in the story. She helps grab unsafe luggage transport belts. The phrase “snake ‘purposes’” denotes secret, twisted goals, and Eleni is part of this unclear job. Her presence underscores unity, cooperation, and collective responsibility. The poem combines real-life actions with deeper, more abstract meanings. Eleni’s part in the poem brings forth the ideas of working together and the dangers of having hidden purposes.

In Waldman’s poem “Kontraniki,” Naropa and Eleni are connected by their shared background in poetry, their roles as guides, and the community of trial poetry that Naropa University, which Waldman co-founded, has created. Eleni, her niece and a poet, is part of the creative and spiritual environment that Naropa represents. In “Kontraniki,” Eleni is with the speaker, which shows how they are connected by a literary and cultural lineage that is partly based on Naropa’s philosophy. It has a setting that encourages pioneering poetry, spiritual discovery, and working together to make a difference. In the poem, Naropa is not only a real place but also a shared literary and family identity that both Waldman and Eleni have. So, Naropa’s importance to Eleni is a sign of how they are both part of a family of poetic creativity, spirituality, and generational interaction that is important to Waldman’s work and life [23].

In short, “Kontraniki” talks about broken selves, memories, and duality through the breaking apart and mixing of voices and identities, the non-linear layering of memories, and the chaos of stable language and autobiographical story frameworks. This provides a poetic place where many identities and memories can live together and interact. This shows how complicated and unstable the self and memory are in modern life. Fatima Saleem’s article says: Feminist postmodern literature fundamentally reconstitutes the notion of the self by undermining rigid,





essentialist identities and advocating for fragmentation, plurality, and linguistic flexibility. By trying out narratives and breaking down patriarchal myths, these texts question the predominant cultural ideas that have historically limited women's identities. They also offer fresh ways to show that gender is socially created. This literary reinterpretation aligns with and enhances feminist identity politics by supporting intersectionality and diversity while opposing solid classifications. [24]. This remark illustrates how psycho-feminist viewpoints in postmodern women's poetry interact with fragmentation, duality, and fluid concepts of selfhood as survival mechanisms associated with memory, desire, and identity.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

The examination of memory, dualism, oppression, and compassion in the chosen poems illustrates the significant capacity of poetry to capture fragmented identities and the resilience inherent in human existence. These poets address individual and communal trauma through their distinctive voices and stylistic innovations, providing structure and significance to experiences that are frequently disjointed, traumatic, and contradictory. Their poems reveal the complexities of identity influenced by cultural memory and societal influences, while also demonstrating poetry's role as a medium for regaining, empathy, and healing. Readers should think about how memory can be both a burden and a source of strength, as well as how opposites like hope and loss, ambition and self-doubt, and oppression and empowerment show how people are always trying to figure out who they are in a society that is sometimes harsh.

This study finds the connection between personal and collective history in these poems to be particularly convincing, as it reflects the complex realities that many people experience today. Dove, Lorde, and Waldman show us that it's brave to accept being vulnerable and having contradictions. This is inspirational for everyone who is struggling with their identity and facing challenges. In the end, this piece shows how important poetry is as both a witness and a healer—a place where brokenness can be seen and turned into a desire to live and grow.

### 5.2 Recommendations

This analysis suggests that other researchers should approach these poems with an openness to complexity and contradiction, understanding that fragmented identities are not revealing of weakness but rather spots of creative agency and transformation. A more exact understanding of how poetry responds to ongoing social injustices and personal problems can be gained by engaging fully with these issues. These poets' writings



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promote an empathetic comprehension of both the poets' experiences and our own challenges with memory, grief, and survival. And this can be a good chance for further studies on the mentioned themes.

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